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Highlights

Ontario Provincial Report on Achievement

EQAO

Education Quality and Accountability Office

English-Language Schools

EQAO Assessment Results:

Grade 3 Assessment of Reading, Writing and Mathematics

Grade 6 Assessment of Reading, Writing and Mathematics

1998-1999

Highlights

EQAO

Education
Quality and
Accountability
Office

Ontario Provincial Report on Achievement English-Language Schools

EQAO Assessment Results:

- Grade 3 Assessment of Reading, Writing and Mathematics
- Grade 6 Assessment of Reading, Writing and Mathematics

1998-1999

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Note: In this report, the word "parent(s)" means a parent, legal guardian or any other person who acts as a caregiver.

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The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) is an independent, arm's-length agency established in June 1996 by the Government of Ontario to ensure greater accountability and to contribute to the enhancement of the quality of publicly funded education in Ontario.

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INTRODUCTION

This document contains highlights from the *1998-1999 Provincial Report on Achievement*. Published annually, the *Provincial Report* brings together what EQAO has learned over the past year about student achievement and education quality in Ontario schools.

To obtain a more complete picture of EQAO's findings and recommendations, parents are encouraged to review the full *Provincial Report*. EQAO has distributed copies to every school board director, school principal, school council and to all public depository libraries. Copies can also be downloaded from EQAO's Web site, which is located at www.eqao.com.

EQAO promotes greater accountability and better quality in Ontario's publicly funded school system. An independent, arm's-length agency of the provincial government, EQAO provides parents, teachers and the public with accurate and reliable information about student achievement.

Each year, EQAO makes both specific and general recommendations for improvement. This document outlines EQAO's specific recommendations in reading, in writing and in mathematics. It also summarizes EQAO's general recommendations for all members of the educational community, including students, parents, teachers, principals, schools, communities, school boards, faculties of education, the Ontario College of Teachers and the Ministry of Education.

EQAO conducts a range of province-wide assessments. The Grade 3 assessment has been in place for three years. It involves all students, occurs annually and provides information on what students have learned in reading, writing and mathematics. In 1998-1999, EQAO introduced an annual Grade 6 assessment that measures student achievement in the same three subject areas.

EQAO is in the process of developing two new assessments which will complement EQAO's current elementary initiatives and give parents, educators, policy makers and the public a more complete picture of student achievement in secondary school. Starting in 2000-2001, all Grade 9 students will participate in an annual mathematics assessment. Starting in the same year, all Grade 10 students who are working toward a high school diploma will be required to participate in the annual Grade 10 Test of Reading and Writing Skills.

EQAO is also responsible for coordinating Ontario's participation in national and international assessments. The full *Provincial Report* includes results achieved by 13-year-olds and 16-year-olds on the national reading and writing assessment which was administered in 1998 as part of the School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP).

The Grade 3 and the Grade 6 Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics: 1998-1999

SNAPSHOT

- Administered May 1999
- 138,187 Grade 3 students and 131,439 Grade 6 students
- Over 3,100 schools
- Both assessments consisted of 5-day units of work
- Students completed assessment tasks independently
- The assessments were based on the expectations in *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8*
- Results are reported using four achievement levels
- *Individual Student Reports* were distributed in September 1999
- Schools and school boards must release their results by December 1, 1999

The Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessments are conducted annually in every publicly funded elementary school. They measure how well students have met the provincial expectations in *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8*. Each assessment covers knowledge and skills in reading, writing and mathematics that students are expected to have acquired by the end of the grade. The Grade 3 assessment looks at what students have learned by the end of Grade 3; the Grade 6 assessment looks at what students have learned by the end of Grade 6.

The two assessments were administered in May 1999. They each involved students for two and a half hours a day over a period of five days. In both grades, students did brief introductory activities with their classmates and teacher, and then worked independently to solve problems, write responses and answer multiple-choice questions.

The assessments each focussed on a concept: the Grade 3 assessment on *Change*, the Grade 6 assessment on *Perspectives*. They encouraged students to explore and investigate various aspects of change and perspectives.

The assessments were developed and marked by teams of specially trained classroom teachers and principals.

During the Assessment

In reading, students demonstrated their knowledge and skills by reading a variety of materials, including factual information, stories and poetry. The reading components of the assessments measured how well students could use various reading strategies and conventions and how effectively they could understand concepts, make inferences and connect ideas.

In writing, students demonstrated their knowledge and skills by using a range of forms and by writing for different purposes. The writing components of the assessments measured how well students could use writing strategies and language conventions and how effectively they could understand assigned tasks, organize ideas and communicate with a reader. During the Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessments, students produced two pieces of written work. They also selected a third writing sample from work completed earlier in the year.

In mathematics, students demonstrated their knowledge and skills by solving problems, applying procedures and explaining how they arrived at their answers. In addition to measuring how well students could use mathematical concepts and procedures, solve problems and communicate their knowledge, the mathematics components of the assessments also tested students' knowledge and skills within the five strands of mathematics: Number Sense and Numeration, Geometry and Spatial Sense, Measurement, Patterning and Algebra, and Data Management and Probability.

Students with Special Needs

All Grade 3 and Grade 6 students are expected to participate in the assessments. In specific circumstances, EQAO allows teachers to provide certain kinds of assistance to students with special needs. In rare instances, a student may need to be exempted from participating in part or all of an assessment. Before granting an exemption, the principal must consult with the student's teacher and parents, and obtain written parental consent.

Assessment Results

EQAO reports on student achievement in reading, writing and mathematics using a four-level scale. The four levels describe how well students performed in each subject area.

This section provides an overall picture of how Grade 3 and Grade 6 students did on the assessments in reading, in writing and in mathematics. The full report provides additional information on specific aspects of student achievement in each subject by showing how well students performed within each of the categories and within five strands of mathematics.

The subject categories are based on the expectations outlined for each grade in *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8*. Each category identifies certain knowledge and skills in reading, writing and mathematics which students are expected to acquire by the end of either Grade 3 or Grade 6. In mathematics, there are strands as well as categories. A strand is a key area of knowledge and skill in the mathematics curriculum.

Comparing Assessment Results

1998-1999 was the third consecutive year that all Grade 3 students were assessed in reading, writing and mathematics. However, since a new curriculum was implemented in the 1997-1998 school year, results from the first Grade 3 assessment in 1996-1997 cannot be compared directly with those from the 1997-1998 and 1998-1999 assessments.

Educators, parents, policy makers and members of the general public now have two years of Grade 3 student achievement data based on the same set of curriculum expectations. They also have three years of background data from the questionnaires which students, teachers, principals and parents completed during each assessment.

Since this is the first year that all Grade 6 students were assessed in reading, writing and mathematics, the 1998-1999 Grade 6 results are baseline data which will provide a foundation for future analysis. In this year's *Provincial Report*, the Grade 3 and Grade 6 results are presented together to provide the reader with a sense of the patterns which extend across the two grades and to reinforce the point that assessment data are relevant to the entire elementary school community.

The Grade 3 and Grade 6 achievement data provide general insights as well as specific information about students' strengths and weaknesses in various aspects of the curriculum. The contextual data about students' attitudes and practices, and those of teachers, principals and parents, provide a rich backdrop for interpreting results and for determining where additional emphasis or further action may be needed.

The overall reading and mathematics scores from the 1997-1998 and 1998-1999 assessments can be compared from year to year. The reading and mathematics components each contain a set of multiple-choice questions which overlaps from year to year. EQAO is in the process of developing a mechanism to ensure comparability of the overall writing scores.

Taken together, the data from the Grade 3 and the Grade 6 assessments provide an emerging picture of student achievement in the elementary years. Data from future province-wide assessments will clarify and enhance this picture over time. Schools and school boards will need to re-examine and refine their action plans for improvement based on new information from these assessments and from other sources, such as board assessments, feedback from teachers and parents and daily classroom observations.

Exemptions 1998-1999

	GRADE 3	GRADE 6
Students exempt in all three subjects	4%	4%
Students exempt in Reading	6%	4%
Students exempt in Writing	5%	4%
Students exempt in Mathematics	5%	4%

What EQAO Learned about Students and Schools from the 1998-1999 Assessments

GRADE 3

- 39% of Grade 3 classrooms had over 25 students; the average Grade 3 class size was 19.
- 49% of the Grade 3 classes contained only Grade 3 students; the rest were multi-grade classes.
- 48% of the participants in the Grade 3 assessment were girls; 51% were boys.
- Grade 3 students in English-language schools indicated that the language they speak at home was: mostly or only English, 79%; mostly or only another language, 8%; and English as often as another language, 12%.
- 5% of students were identified by their teacher as having been in an English as a Second Language (ESL) program.
- 6% of the Grade 3 students had been formally identified as exceptional and were receiving special education support (excluding gifted).
- 12% of Grade 3 students had *not* been formally identified as exceptional but were receiving remedial special education support.
- 17% of Grade 3 students received special education support (excluding gifted and enrichment).
- 7% of the Grade 3 students who participated in the assessment were enrolled in French Immersion.
- 50% of the teachers who administered the 1998-1999 Grade 3 assessment were also involved in administering the 1997-1998 Grade 3 assessment.

Due to rounding and non-response, percentages for the data may not always sum to 100.

GRADE 6

- 64% of Grade 6 classrooms had over 25 students; the average Grade 6 class size was 21.
- 54% of the Grade 6 classes contained only Grade 6 students; the rest were multi-grade classes.
- 48% of participants in the Grade 6 assessment were girls; 50% were boys.
- Grade 6 students indicated that the language they speak most often at home was: mostly or only English, 82%; mostly or only another language, 6%; and English as often as another language, 10%.
- 3% of students were identified by their teacher as having been in an English as a Second Language (ESL) program.
- 10% of the Grade 6 students had been formally identified as exceptional and were receiving special education support (excluding gifted).
- 7% of the Grade 6 students had *not* been formally identified as exceptional but were receiving remedial special education support.
- 17% of Grade 6 students received special education support (excluding gifted and enrichment).
- 7% of the Grade 6 students who participated in the assessment were enrolled in French Immersion.

Due to rounding and non-response, percentages for the data may not always sum to 100.

The Grade 3 and the Grade 6 Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics: 1998-1999

Grade 3 Overall Achievement in **Reading**

LEVELS 3 AND 4

44% of students achieved at Levels 3 and 4 in reading, with 39% at Level 3 and 5% at Level 4. This is a decrease of 2% over the 1997-1998 overall results. These students demonstrate and communicate extensive to in-depth knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills.

LEVELS 1 AND 2

45% of students achieved at Levels 1 and 2, with 11% at Level 1 and 34% at Level 2. This is an increase of 5% over the 1997-1998 overall results, with all of the increase at Level 1. These students demonstrate limited to some knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills.

Grade 6 Overall Achievement in **Reading**

LEVELS 3 AND 4

48% of students achieved at Levels 3 and 4 in reading, with 40% at Level 3 and 8% at Level 4. These students demonstrate and communicate extensive to in-depth knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills.

LEVELS 1 AND 2

44% of students achieved at Levels 1 and 2, with 9% at Level 1 and 35% at Level 2. These students demonstrate limited to some knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills.

Grade 3 and Grade 6 Overall Achievement at Levels 3 and 4 by:

	GRADE 3		GRADE 6	
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Male
	49%	39%	56%	40%
Language	Non-ESL	ESL	Non-ESL	ESL
	45%	21%	49%	17%
Special Education Support	Not Receiving Support	Receiving Support	Not Receiving Support	Receiving Support
	51%	9%	55%	11%

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OVERALL LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT – GRADE 3

KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS CATEGORIES	EXEMPT	NO DATA	NOT ENOUGH INFORMATION TO SCORE	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Overall Level of Achievement in **Reading**				Demonstrates limited knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills	Demonstrates some knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills	Demonstrates general knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills	Demonstrates thorough knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills
	6	3	2	11	34	39	5
	N/A	N/A	3	13	37	43	5

OVERALL LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT – GRADE 6

KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS CATEGORIES	EXEMPT	NO DATA	NOT ENOUGH INFORMATION TO SCORE	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Overall Level of Achievement in **Reading**				Demonstrates limited knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills	Demonstrates some knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills	Demonstrates general knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills	Demonstrates thorough knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills
	4	1	3	9	35	40	8
	N/A	N/A	3	9	37	42	8

REPORTING
EQAO reports assessment results in two ways:

- **Method 1** expresses the number of students achieving at each level as a percentage of **all** of the students in the grade, including students who were exempted and those who took part in the assessment but did not produce enough work to be scored. This is EQAO's primary method of reporting because publicly funded schools are accountable for the achievement and progress of all students.
- **Method 2** expresses the number of students achieving at each level as a percentage of those students who **actually** took part in the assessment and produced work that could be scored. Method 2 is an alternative way of presenting the data. It highlights the results achieved by this group of students.

Due to rounding, percentages for the achievement data may not always sum to 100.

OVERALL LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT – GRADE 3

KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS CATEGORIES	EXEMPT	NO DATA	NOT ENOUGH INFORMATION TO SCORE	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Overall Level of Achievement in Reading				Demonstrates limited knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills	Demonstrates some knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills	Demonstrates general knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills	Demonstrates thorough knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills
	6	3	2	11	34	39	5
	N/A	N/A	3	13	37	43	5

OVERALL LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT – GRADE 6

KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS CATEGORIES	EXEMPT	NO DATA	NOT ENOUGH INFORMATION TO SCORE	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Overall Level of Achievement in Reading				Demonstrates limited knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills	Demonstrates some knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills	Demonstrates general knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills	Demonstrates thorough knowledge, understanding and application of reading skills
	4	1	3	9	35	40	8
	N/A	N/A	3	9	37	42	8

REPORTING
EQAO reports assessment results in two ways:

- **Method 1** expresses the number of students achieving at each level as a percentage of **all** of the students in the grade, including students who were exempted and those who took part in the assessment but did not produce enough work to be scored. This is EQAO's primary method of reporting because publicly funded schools are accountable for the achievement and progress of all students.
- **Method 2** expresses the number of students achieving at each level as a percentage of those students who **actually** took part in the assessment and produced work that could be scored. Method 2 is an alternative way of presenting the data. It highlights the results achieved by this group of students.

Due to rounding, percentages for the achievement data may not always sum to 100.

OTHER FINDINGS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES

THE TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

- Roughly 85% of Grade 3 teachers indicate they are "somewhat comfortable" or "very comfortable" teaching the four reading categories. This is a marked increase over 1997-1998 responses which ranged from a high of 78% to a low of 65%. Over 85% of the Grade 6 teachers indicate they are "somewhat comfortable" or "very comfortable" teaching the four reading categories.
- Both Grade 3 and Grade 6 teachers indicate some discomfort assessing students' achievement in reading, although Grade 6 teachers indicate more discomfort in some categories than in others. Less than 10% of Grade 3 and Grade 6 teachers are "very uncomfortable" or "somewhat uncomfortable" assessing student achievement in all four categories.

THE STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

- In Grade 3, 69% of boys and 83% of girls indicate they like to read. This is a marked increase over the 1997-1998 percentages. In Grade 6, 55% of boys and 71% of girls indicate they like to read.
- 54% of Grade 3 and 55% of Grade 6 students indicate they read outside of regular school work. The Grade 3 percentage shows little change from 1997-1998.
- In Grade 3, 60% of girls and 49% of boys indicate that they do reading "that is not part of my work for school". In Grade 6, this holds true for 62% of girls and 47% of boys.

THE HOME QUESTIONNAIRE

- 69% of Grade 3 parents and 54% of Grade 6 parents indicate they assist their child with reading by talking about what he or she is reading, and around three-quarters of the parents indicate they encourage their child to read materials that are not related to schoolwork.
- 54% of Grade 3 parents indicate they "read to their child" while 38% of Grade 6 parents indicate they "listen to their child read".

EQAO's Specific Reading Recommendations

1) That teachers continue to provide instruction which will increase the number of students reaching the provincial standard across all categories in the reading curriculum.
2) That elementary teachers in all grades focus on the expectations in Application of Language Conventions to ensure that all of the conventions (spelling, punctuation, grammar and style) are being addressed.
3) That all elementary teachers use reading strategies that promote higher-order thinking skills more frequently.
4) That all elementary teachers develop their capacity to assess student learning in the classroom by talking with other teachers who are experienced in a range of classroom assessment activities in reading, visiting other classrooms, speaking with school board support personnel and pursuing professional development.
5) That teachers encourage parents to be involved with their child's reading throughout the elementary grades, by both reading to their child and listening to their child read and by talking to their child about what she or he reads.
6) That all elementary teachers make every effort to increase students' enjoyment of reading.
7) That teachers and parents make a greater range of reading materials available so that both boys and girls are motivated to read outside of their classroom assignments.
8) That school boards review their allocation of resources (human and material) to ensure that teachers have the support they require to implement the curriculum and assess student learning in their classrooms.

The Grade 3 and the Grade 6 Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics: 1998-1999

Grade 3 Overall Achievement in **Writing**

LEVELS 3 AND 4

51% of students achieved at Levels 3 and 4 in writing, with 45% at Level 3 and 6% at Level 4. Students at these two levels demonstrate and communicate extensive to in-depth knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills.

LEVELS 1 AND 2

40% of students achieved at Levels 1 and 2, with 3% at Level 1 and 37% at Level 2. Students at these two levels demonstrate limited to some knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills.

Grade 6 Overall Achievement in **Writing**

LEVELS 3 AND 4

48% of students achieved at Levels 3 and 4 in writing, with 37% at Level 3 and 11% at Level 4. Students at these levels demonstrate and communicate extensive to in-depth knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills.

LEVELS 1 AND 2

44% of students achieved at Levels 1 and 2, with 9% at Level 1 and 35% at Level 2. Students at these levels demonstrate limited to some knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills.

Grade 3 and Grade 6 Overall Achievement at Levels 3 and 4 by:

	GRADE 3		GRADE 6	
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Male
	59%	44%	59%	38%
Language	Non-ESL	ESL	Non-ESL	ESL
	52%	34%	49%	22%
Special Education Support	Not Receiving Support	Receiving Support	Not Receiving Support	Receiving Support
	58%	17%	59%	13%

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OVERALL LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT – GRADE 3

KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS CATEGORIES	EXEMPT	NO DATA	NOT ENOUGH INFORMATION TO SCORE	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Overall Level of Achievement in **Writing**				Demonstrates limited knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills	Demonstrates some knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills	Demonstrates general knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills	Demonstrates thorough knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills
	5	3	2	3	37	45	6
	N/A	N/A	2	3	40	49	7

OVERALL LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT – GRADE 6

KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS CATEGORIES	EXEMPT	NO DATA	NOT ENOUGH INFORMATION TO SCORE	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Overall Level of Achievement in **Writing**				Demonstrates limited knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills	Demonstrates some knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills	Demonstrates general knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills	Demonstrates thorough knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills
	4	1	4	9	35	37	11
	N/A	N/A	4	9	37	39	11

REPORTING
EQAO reports assessment results in two ways:

- **Method 1** expresses the number of students achieving at each level as a percentage of **all** of the students in the grade, including students who were exempted and those who took part in the assessment but did not produce enough work to be scored. This is EQAO's primary method of reporting because publicly funded schools are accountable for the achievement and progress of all students.
- **Method 2** expresses the number of students achieving at each level as a percentage of those students who **actually** took part in the assessment and produced work that could be scored. Method 2 is an alternative way of presenting the data. It highlights the results achieved by this group of students.

Due to rounding, percentages for the achievement data may not always sum to 100.

OVERALL LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT – GRADE 3

KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS CATEGORIES	EXEMPT	NO DATA	NOT ENOUGH INFORMATION TO SCORE	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Overall Level of Achievement in Writing				Demonstrates limited knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills	Demonstrates some knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills	Demonstrates general knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills	Demonstrates thorough knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills
	5	3	2	3	37	45	6
	N/A	N/A	2	3	40	49	7

OVERALL LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT – GRADE 6

KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS CATEGORIES	EXEMPT	NO DATA	NOT ENOUGH INFORMATION TO SCORE	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Overall Level of Achievement in Writing				Demonstrates limited knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills	Demonstrates some knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills	Demonstrates general knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills	Demonstrates thorough knowledge, understanding and application of writing skills
	4	1	4	9	35	37	11
	N/A	N/A	4	9	37	39	11

REPORTING
EQAO reports assessment results in two ways:

☐ **Method 1** expresses the number of students achieving at each level as a percentage of **all** of the students in the grade, including students who were exempted and those who took part in the assessment but did not produce enough work to be scored. This is EQAO's primary method of reporting because publicly funded schools are accountable for the achievement and progress of all students.

☐ **Method 2** expresses the number of students achieving at each level as a percentage of those students who **actually** took part in the assessment and produced work that could be scored. Method 2 is an alternative way of presenting the data. It highlights the results achieved by this group of students.

Due to rounding, percentages for the achievement data may not always sum to 100.

OTHER FINDINGS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES

THE TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

- Over three-quarters of Grade 3 teachers and over 65% of Grade 6 teachers spend more than 40 minutes a day on writing and related activities. This is a marginal increase for Grade 3 teachers over 1997-1998.
- Over 85% of Grade 3 teachers and around two-thirds of Grade 6 teachers indicate they are "somewhat comfortable" or "very comfortable" teaching the various writing categories.
- Less than 10% of Grade 3 and Grade 6 teachers indicate some discomfort assessing students' achievement in writing in the Reasoning and Communication categories.

THE STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

- Students in both Grade 3 and Grade 6 indicate a preference for writing stories and letters or cards; teachers in both grades engage students more frequently in reading and writing stories and less frequently in reading and writing informative articles.
- In Grade 3, 72% of girls and 58% of boys indicate they like to write. These are roughly the same percentages of students who in 1997-1998 indicated that they like to write. In Grade 6, 58% of girls and 43% of boys indicate they like to write.
- Over one-quarter of Grade 3 students, boys and girls equally, indicate they do not talk to someone else before writing, and over 20% indicate they do not like to talk about what they write.

THE HOME QUESTIONNAIRE

- Many parents of both Grade 3 and Grade 6 students indicate they have writing materials, including computers, available to their child at home.
- Around three-quarters of Grade 3 parents indicate that they read what their child has written, talk to their child about what he or she has written and encourage their child to write in addition to school work. For Grade 6 parents, this percentage is between 40% and 60%.

EQAO's Specific Writing Recommendations

1) That teachers continue to provide instruction which will increase the number of students reaching the provincial standard across all categories in the writing curriculum.
2) That all elementary teachers provide students with more frequent opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences in order to help students integrate the components of writing and consolidate their skills across all categories.
3) That all elementary teachers focus strongly on the expectations associated with the conventions of spelling, punctuation and grammar across all grades.
4) That all elementary teachers increase their capacity to assess student writing, particularly the categories Reasoning and Communication, by talking with other teachers who are experienced in a range of classroom assessment activities in writing, visiting other classrooms, speaking with school board support personnel and pursuing professional development.
5) That all elementary teachers create more opportunities for students to read and write informative articles and other types of non-fiction.
6) That all elementary teachers review their writing programs to ensure that materials and assignments are appealing to boys as well as girls.
7) That all elementary teachers provide opportunities for students to consolidate and apply their learning by focussing more strongly on writing tasks that have real-life applications.
8) That all elementary teachers continue to work with school councils to encourage students to use writing as a means of communicating thoughts, feelings and information outside the school environment.
9) That parents continue to talk to their children about what they have written, to listen to their children read what they have written and to encourage writing activities beyond those assigned in the classroom.
10) That school boards review their allocation of resources (human and material) to provide teachers with the support they require to implement the curriculum and assess student learning in their classrooms.

The Grade 3 and the Grade 6 Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics: 1998-1999

Grade 3 Overall Achievement in **Mathematics**

LEVELS 3 AND 4

56% of students achieved at Levels 3 and 4 in mathematics, with 46% at Level 3 and 10% at Level 4. This is an increase of 13% over the 1997-1998 overall results. These students demonstrate and communicate extensive to in-depth knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skills.

LEVELS 1 AND 2

37% of students achieved at Levels 1 and 2, with 8% at Level 1 and 29% at Level 2. This represents a decrease of 9% over the 1997-1998 results, with most of the decrease in the number of students at Level 1. These students demonstrate and communicate limited to some knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skills.

Grade 6 Overall Achievement in **Mathematics**

LEVELS 3 AND 4

46% of students achieved at Levels 3 and 4 in mathematics, with 35% at Level 3 and 11% at Level 4. These students demonstrate and communicate extensive to in-depth knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skills.

LEVELS 1 AND 2

47% of students achieved at Levels 1 and 2, with 12% at Level 1 and 35% at Level 2. These students demonstrate limited to some knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skills.

Grade 3 and Grade 6 Overall Achievement at Levels 3 and 4 by:

	GRADE 3		GRADE 6	
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Male
	58%	55%	47%	45%
Language	Non-ESL	ESL	Non-ESL	ESL
	58%	37%	46%	31%
Special Education Support	Not Receiving Support	Receiving Support	Not Receiving Support	Receiving Support
	64%	21%	52%	11%

M121

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OVERALL LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT – GRADE 3

KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS CATEGORIES	EXEMPT	NO DATA	NOT ENOUGH INFORMATION TO SCORE	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Overall Level of Achievement in **Mathematics**				Demonstrates limited knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skills	Demonstrates some knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skills	Demonstrates general knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skills	Demonstrates thorough knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skill
	5	1	1	8	29	46	10
	N/A	N/A	1	8	31	49	11

OVERALL LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT – GRADE 6

KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS CATEGORIES	EXEMPT	NO DATA	NOT ENOUGH INFORMATION TO SCORE	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Overall Level of Achievement in **Mathematics**				Demonstrates limited knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skills	Demonstrates some knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skills	Demonstrates general knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skills	Demonstrates thorough knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skill
	4	1	3	12	35	35	11
	N/A	N/A	3	12	37	36	12

REPORTING
EQAO reports assessment results in two ways:

- **Method 1** expresses the number of students achieving at each level as a percentage of **all** of the students in the grade, including students who were exempted and those who took part in the assessment but did not produce enough work to be scored. This is EQAO's primary method of reporting because publicly funded schools are accountable for the achievement and progress of all students.

- **Method 2** expresses the number of students achieving at each level as a percentage of those students who **actually** took part in the assessment and produced work that could be scored. Method 2 is an alternative way of presenting the data. It highlights the results achieved by this group of students.

Due to rounding, percentages for the achievement data may not always sum to 100.

OVERALL LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT – GRADE 3

KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS CATEGORIES	EXEMPT	NO DATA	NOT ENOUGH INFORMATION TO SCORE	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Overall Level of Achievement in Mathematics				Demonstrates limited knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skills	Demonstrates some knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skills	Demonstrates general knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skills	Demonstrates thorough knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skill
	5	1	1	8	29	46	10
	N/A	N/A	1	8	31	49	11

OVERALL LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT – GRADE 6

KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS CATEGORIES	EXEMPT	NO DATA	NOT ENOUGH INFORMATION TO SCORE	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Overall Level of Achievement in Mathematics				Demonstrates limited knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skills	Demonstrates some knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skills	Demonstrates general knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skills	Demonstrates thorough knowledge, understanding and application of mathematics skill
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OTHER FINDINGS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES

THE TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

- Grade 3 teachers indicate they are paying more attention to teaching all aspects of the mathematics curriculum. Around 90% of teachers now indicate they are "very comfortable" or "somewhat comfortable" teaching all mathematical strands and categories. Last year's percentages ranged from 58% to 88%.
- Although there is a slight increase in Grade 3 teachers' use of mathematics activities similar to those in EQAO assessments, many teachers still do not use such activities with any frequency. Less than 10% of the teachers remain "very uncomfortable" or "somewhat uncomfortable" assessing some strands and categories.
- There are slight increases in Grade 3 teachers' use of strategies that promote higher-order thinking in mathematics. However, teachers still do so infrequently.

THE STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

- In Grade 3, 65% of boys and 60% of girls indicate they like mathematics. The percentages are virtually unchanged from last year. In Grade 6, 56% of boys and 41% of girls indicate they like mathematics.
- Many students indicate they do not talk to people about what they do in mathematics.
- Over 30% of the students indicated they do not "like to talk about mathematics".

THE HOME QUESTIONNAIRE

- More than 70% of Grade 3 parents help their child with number questions and problem solving. This percentage is around 55% for Grade 6 parents.

EQAO's Specific Mathematics Recommendations

1) That all elementary teachers continue to provide instruction which will increase the number of students reaching the provincial standard across all categories and strands in the mathematics curriculum.
2) That all elementary teachers develop their capacity to assess student learning in the classroom by talking with other teachers who use a range of classroom assessment activities in mathematics, visiting other classrooms, speaking with school board support personnel and taking advantage of other professional development opportunities.
3) That all elementary teachers focus on teaching and assessing student learning in Communication of Required Knowledge, Problem Solving and Geometry and Spatial Sense.
4) That parents and teachers continue to work together to improve students' communication skills in mathematics and to increase opportunities for students to apply their mathematics skills to real-life situations beyond the classroom. A strong focus on Communication of Required Knowledge is particularly critical for students in ESL programs and for students receiving Special Education support.
5) That school boards review their allocation of resources (human and material) to provide more support for teachers to implement the curriculum and to assess student learning in their classrooms.

Responding Effectively to Assessment Data: An Analysis of School Board Action Plans for Improvement

"Large-scale assessment rarely provides unequivocal answers, but it does create a context within which different interests – policy makers, professional educators, and parents, among others – can find a basis for informed dialogue. It can provide the foundation for debates about public policy, and identify the general direction for making changes in emphasis or focus. More than anything, policy makers must create a range of action plans for responding directly to the results of the assessments."

Ontario Royal Commission on Learning (1994)

In the *1996-1997 Provincial Report on Achievement*, EQAO recommended that schools and school boards work with parents to incorporate province-wide assessment data and information from other sources into their planning for the improvement of learning and teaching.

Schools and school boards are required to use their province-wide assessment results to develop action plans for improvement. In each school and school board, educators are expected to work with parents, school councils and community members to prepare and release an action plan, taking into account data from EQAO's assessments and from the other assessments they conduct. School and school board action plans typically specify goals, strategies, resources and responsibilities. To be effective, these plans must outline timelines as well as mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating and reporting to parents and the public on their effectiveness in meeting students' needs.

In the *1997-1998 Provincial Report on Achievement*, EQAO recommended that school boards and schools include the effective use of province-wide assessment information as a priority in their organizational planning and curriculum management programs. This recommendation emphasized the need to coordinate school and school board actions through a system-wide approach. It encouraged school boards and schools to develop and implement action plans based on their analyses of both provincial and local assessment data and to review and update these plans regularly.

Review of School Board Action Plans for Improvement

EQAO asked school boards to develop and submit a copy of their action plan for improvement by February 1, 1999. To assist school boards in developing their plans, EQAO published an *Educator Handbook* which described the components of an effective plan. EQAO used this information to review each plan. In addition, EQAO drew on all of the plans that school boards submitted and on research in effective improvement planning to identify concepts and practices that school boards need to consider as they evaluate and revise their plans from year to year.

Observations

All but one of the 60 English-language school boards in Ontario submitted a copy of its action plan to EQAO.

The plans submitted varied widely in their focus, content and structure. Some school boards submitted a letter attached to a school board report detailing results from the Grade 3 assessment. Other school boards submitted comprehensive action plans linked to their overall planning processes. Some school boards presented their plans using highly structured templates, others used a narrative approach, and some others compiled a list of activities they planned to undertake.

As the following chart demonstrates, a number of the plans submitted will require significant additions and revisions in order to provide educators, parents and community members with a coherent framework for implementing constructive changes.

CRITERIA USED TO ANALYZE SCHOOL BOARD ACTION PLANS	INCORPORATED BY MAJORITY OF SCHOOL BOARDS	SOME SCHOOL BOARDS	A FEW SCHOOL BOARDS	ALMOST NO SCHOOL BOARDS
1. Invite parents, school councils and community groups to help analyze the achievement and contextual data and prepare a school board-wide plan for improvement.			✔	
2. Expect schools to involve parents, school councils and communities in the development of school action plans and school profiles.		✔		
3. Choose curriculum areas for improvement. Take into consideration strategies and directions which are appropriate to the school board, and which can be implemented through a cycle of review, development and implementation.	✔			
4. Clarify the expected results for the areas chosen for improvement.			✔	
5. List procedures and strategies that are currently working well.			✔	
6. Explore strategies for improvement that might be used to achieve the expected results. Select those which would be manageable and most effective for improving student learning.			✔	
7. Review EQAO's recommendations from the *Provincial Report on Achievement*.	✔			
8. Identify resources (human, material, monetary) that would be needed to implement strategies.		✔		
9. Decide who would be responsible for obtaining the necessary resources and/or teachers, administrators, parents or the school community.		✔		
10. Develop a multi-year school board action plan.				✔
11. Ensure time lines are realistic.			✔	
12. Decide how to monitor the progress of the plan at frequent intervals.			✔	
13. List indicators that would be used to gauge the plan's effectiveness.			✔	
14. Release copies of the school board action plan to parents, teachers and the local community.	✔			

RECOMMENDATIONS

"The enormous complications of today's world and the even greater complications of tomorrow's, signal a new mission for education: one that requires schools not merely to "deliver instruction" but to ensure that all students learn - and to do so in more powerful and effective ways. Students are entering a society and an economy that will require them to manage complexity; create ideas, services, and products; use ever-evolving technologies; and plan and evaluate their own work.

If schools are to meet this new challenge, they must find ways to dramatically enrich the intellectual opportunities they offer while meeting the diverse needs of students who bring with them varying talents, interests, learning styles, cultures, predispositions, language backgrounds, family situations, and beliefs about themselves and about what school means for them."

Linda Darling-Hammond

A central part of EQAO's mandate is to make recommendations for improvement.

As in the past, this year's *Provincial Report on Achievement* contains two kinds of recommendations. In the section dealing with the Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessments, EQAO made several subject-specific recommendations for teachers, parents, schools and school boards. This section contains general recommendations for all members of the educational community, including students, parents, teachers, principals, schools, communities, school boards, faculties of education, the Ontario College of Teachers and the Ministry of Education.

In developing this year's general recommendations, EQAO built on data from the 1998-1999 Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessments and on the recommendations it has made over the past three years. EQAO also considered information from a variety of other sources:

> Action plans for improvement that school boards submitted to EQAO in the winter of 1999.

> Results from national and international assessments.

> Research relevant to EQAO's mandate.

> Ongoing discussions with educational organizations and with students, educators, parents, policy makers and members of the public.

Accordingly, EQAO recommends that:

1. All **students,** guided by their teachers, principals and parents
   > examine the quality of their work in relation to the provincial expectations;
   > identify personal learning goals;
   > create a plan for achieving these goals; and
   > monitor their progress over time by reviewing and updating the plan.
2. **Parents,** with support from school boards and schools, take steps to
   > learn more about the provincial curriculum and school programs;
   > understand how achievement is assessed;
   > become informed about school and school board improvement planning processes; and
   > familiarize themselves with strategies they can use at home to reinforce their children's learning.
3. All **teachers** take advantage of opportunities to learn from colleagues, both inside and outside the school, and to participate in formal training in order to develop their skills in classroom assessment and improvement planning.
4. All **principals** ensure that they have expertise in assessment and improvement planning so that they can foster a culture of assessment and continuous improvement in their schools.
5. All **schools** review their action plan for improvement to ensure that it meets the criteria outlined in EQAO's *Educator Handbook*.
6. All **school councils** become actively involved in the preparation of the school and school board action plans for improvement and in the communication of these materials to the community.

7. **Communities,** in interpreting assessment data, take into account all of the factors that influence learning and provide strong support for school improvement efforts.

8. All **school boards** review their improvement planning process to ensure that it:

   a) Provides opportunities for parents, school councils and community members to become informed about assessment processes, to understand assessment data and to contribute to the development of an improvement plan; and

   b) Satisfies the following criteria for the development and implementation of a system action plan for improvement:

      > involves parents, school councils and the community;

      > details system actions to improve student achievement;

      > recognizes procedures and strategies that are currently working well;

      > shares successful practice;

      > is based on local assessment results;

      > reviews the recommendations contained in EQAO's *1998–1999 Provincial Report on Achievement;*

      > identifies areas for improvement;

      > clarifies expected results;

      > explores strategies for improvement to achieve expected results;

      > identifies resources required and responsibility for obtaining resources;

      > provides realistic timelines;

      > outlines indicators to be used to measure effectiveness of the action plan for improvement;

      > describes processes for monitoring progress made toward objectives;

      > provides direction and expectations for school action plans; and

      > ensures that school and system action plans for improvement are shared with parents, school councils and the community.

   c) Includes a mechanism for communicating widely within the system and with parents, school councils and community members.

9. All **faculties of education** review EQAO's findings and the recommendations it has made over the past three years, and:

   a) incorporate modules on the theory and practice of assessment as an integral part of pre-service programs;

b) require students in pre-service programs to demonstrate proficiency in using assessment results to develop programs that improve performance;

c) in pre-service programs, address gaps in knowledge and skills that have been identified in specific subject areas in EQAO's provincial assessments and in other national and international assessments;

d) enhance pre-service programs to prepare students to work in partnership with parents, school councils and community members to improve student achievement; and

e) review entrance requirements and take steps to ensure that candidates have the undergraduate background necessary to teach effectively in the core subject areas from Kindergarten to Grade 8.

10. The **Ontario College of Teachers** review EQAO's findings and the recommendations it has made over the past three years, and:

a) work to expand learning opportunities for teachers in order to develop their assessment knowledge and skills and their capacity to use results productively to improve learning and teaching in support of the standards of practice for the teaching profession;

b) establish and certify Additional Qualifications courses in assessment and improvement planning;

c) accredit participation in EQAO assessment development and marking activities as part of teachers' professional development and ongoing learning;

d) change the requirements for principal certification to include expertise in assessment and in the effective use of data for school improvement planning; and

e) require that assessment and the effective use of data for system improvement planning be part of the Supervisory Officer's Qualifications Program.

11. The **Ministry of Education** review EQAO's findings and the recommendations it has made over the past three years, and:

a) use the cumulative data from EQAO's provincial assessments of student achievement to refine curriculum and to assist in establishing provincial curriculum priorities;

b) continue to provide support for effective daily classroom assessment;

c) provide support for effective system and school improvement planning processes;

d) use the results from provincial assessments to review the implementation of the curriculum; and

e) support the full implementation of EQAO's Education Quality Indicators Program (EQUIP) to obtain a complete picture of all the factors that contribute to achievement and to create a comprehensive accountability framework for Ontario's school boards.

SUGGESTIONS

If your child participated in the Grade 3 or Grade 6 assessment:

- Review the provincial, board and school results. Use these results together with the information on your child's *Individual Student Report* to pinpoint areas where she or he demonstrates strength or needs improvement. Discuss possible improvement strategies with your child's teacher(s).
- Go over the samples of student work in each subject area that EQAO has provided to Grade 4 and Grade 7 teachers. Use the samples to identify characteristics of achievement at different levels and to determine how your child can improve her or his work.
- Work with your school council to prepare the school report and to update the school's action plan for improvement.

- Take time to review the *Provincial Report on Achievement*. Copies are available in school and school board offices, from school council representatives and in all public depository libraries. Copies of the report can also be downloaded from EQAO's Web site (www.eqao.com). Pay particular attention to:
  - > Results from the Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessments
  - > Background information from the student, home, teacher and principal questionnaires
  - > EQAO's recommendations for improvement
- Discuss the *Provincial Report* with other parents and with your child's teacher(s) and principal to get a clearer picture of what your child is expected to learn and how well she or he is learning it.
- Review EQAO's specific recommendations. Discuss the recommendations with your child's teacher(s). Determine what you can do at home to reinforce what your child's teacher is doing in the classroom.
- Become informed about how your school plans to respond to the provincial, board and school results.
- Participate in the process of reviewing, updating and monitoring the implementation of your school's action plan for improvement.

If you have questions or concerns:

Contact:

- Your child's teacher(s) or school principal
- Education Quality and Accountability Office
  2 Carlton Street, Suite 1200
  Toronto, Ontario
  M5B 2M9

  Telephone: 1-888-327-7377

  Web site: www.eqao.com